

SOME ACCOUNT
OF
THE EARLY YEARS
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B U O N A P A R T E,

AT THE
MILITARY SCHOOL OF BRIENNE;
AND
OF HIS CONDUCT AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

By Mr. C. H.
ONE OF HIS SCHOOL-FELLOWS.



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PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR

BY

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1881

THE EARLY YEARS

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ANDREW DOUGLAS, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

YOU have testified a desire to know some particulars of the early years of Buonaparte ; of that young hero, to whom even his enemies cannot refuse their admiration : that wish, and the desire to do something agreeable to you, have suggested

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to me the idea of collecting, as far as my memory could serve me, some facts respecting his birth, his education, and his first steps in that path which he has pursued with so much glory.

Educated with him, the companion of his youth, destined to the same exercises, to the same line of life, we have since been separated by different circumstances.

Buonaparte has contributed to the success of the French Revolution, by which I am a severe sufferer; and even his victories have completed the ruin of my family whom an unlucky star had induced, many years ago, to quit a country, the abode of peace and comfort, to settle in France. My parents, united by the bands of tender attachment, and without other ambition than the happiness of their children, had
limited

limited their desires to the state of quiet mediocrity. They were in the enjoyment of this happy tranquillity when the envy, without doubt, of some of their neighbours involved them amongst the victims to be sacrificed to the French Revolution. Misfortunes, well known to you, have since dispersed my family; but these unhappy circumstances, which impoison my life, have no relation to the magnanimous conduct of the Conqueror of Italy. His own generosity of character is the condemnation of all the revolutionary excesses; and the hero becomes more dear to me, because his victories tend to hasten the return of that peace which Europe so earnestly desires. And, in the most critical times, when cruelty and assassination often accompany ambition, his conduct having been always directed by greatness and elevation of mind, has placed him beyond the reach of reproach.

Buonaparte has not sullied his glory by the condemnation or execution of any of his countrymen; and if his brilliant successes have been at the expence of a number of lives, his clemency towards his conquered enemies has always proved that his heart was not insensible to the disastrous calamities of which an imperious necessity had rendered him the instrument.

In fine: Buonaparte, covered with honour and glory, attracts the attention of the universe. Ambition has made him a great man; and whatever may be the means which have rendered him famous, the world is become interested to know the most trifling circumstances in the life of a man who is a complete hero at the age of twenty-eight years.

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If you kindly accept the following pages, which have nothing to give them value but the subject, my purpose will be fully answered. Receive them, therefore, as an unalterable testimony of the respectful sentiments of

Your affectionate,

Humble Servant and Friend,

C. H.

LONDON,
the 10th of July 1797.

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SOME ACCOUNT
OF
THE EARLY YEARS
OF
BUONAPARTE.

BUONAPARTE, of a family originally Italian, was born, in the year 1769, at Calvi, a little town of Corfica, of parents noble, but poor: his god-father, the celebrated Paoli, gave him at the font the name of Napoleone. Madame de Buonaparte, his mother, (handsome, as they say), had attracted the attention of the Count de Marbœuf, named by
Louis

Louis XV. to the government of Corfica ; and it is to him that malice ascribes the honour of the hero's birth. Should this be true, it would give force to the world's wild opinion, which inclines to bestow on children the offsprings of unlawful love a more decided and manly character. However it may be, the Count de Marbœuf had given many testimonies of friendship and good-will towards the family of Buonaparte ; and had particularly taken upon himself the care of the young man, whom he had a long time assisted with his credit and his purse. In 1778 the Count had designed to send his young *protégé* to France, with the view of giving him an education suitable to his birth, and necessary to his future establishment.

France, under the ancient government,
and more particularly under the reigns of
Louis

Louis XV. and of Louis XVI. had formed establishments for the education of gentlemen of small fortune ; and the munificence of the kings had spared nothing to render them, at the same time, useful and agreeable to young men. These institutions, called *Ecoles Royales Militaires*, were to the number of thirteen, and established in different provinces of the kingdom ; that of Paris served as a centre to the whole, and was the object to which the young men, admitted by the king, directed their views. It was held up as a recompence to those who most distinguished themselves by their progress in the different studies *.

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* For that purpose, a royal inspector, commonly a General Officer, accompanied by two members of the academy, made every year a review of schools. The examination was made in his presence, with the most

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scrupulous

From their entrance into the school at an early age, the minds and bodies of the pupils were kept in constant employment; and their instruction continued for seven or eight years; during which time, the most unremitting care was equally bestowed on all. The most able Masters in every branch gave up all their time to direct the studies of the youth, and to inspire them with sentiments of virtue. The study of ancient and modern languages, of history, of geography, of mathematics, and the various branches of military science, formed the basis of their education. And in these establishments, while the utmost attention was paid to youthful instruction, the agreeable was not forgotten; that, by rendering scrupulous exactness; and those of the pupils, who, to their proficiency in study, received the testimony of the *Regents* in favour of their character, were admitted to the Military School of Paris.

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ence amiable, the youth might not contract that dryness of manner which too frequently accompanies profound erudition.

It was in one of these schools that the Count de Marbœuf was desirous to place the young Buonaparte. Corfica, since being united to France, had obtained for its inhabitants, among other privileges, that of sharing the royal beneficence; so that the Count had no difficulty to procure for his *protégé* the place of one of the *Eleves du Roi*.

The Maréchal de Ségur, then minister of war, and charged with the department of the Military Schools, placed Buonaparte in that of Brienne, in Champagne; in which he entered, I believe, in the beginning of the year 1779.

It was about fifteen or eighteen months afterwards, that my father, availing himself of the right which all strangers of family had, to educate their children in these royal institutions, sent me there to begin my education. Different in temper, and character, and younger than Buonaparte, I formed no particular friendship with him; but living under the same roof, and sharing the same exercises, I remarked him early as something extraordinary, perceiving no one, among one hundred and fifty youths, who in the least resembled him, either in disposition or in taste. In this I only confirmed an idea very generally allowed, that children are often more observing than they appear to be. Of this, curiosity is probably in them the only cause, being more eager in youth than in an advanced age; and a young person, without troubling himself about the reason, which his faculties are not yet

yet able to reach, has his attention attracted and fixed only by that which strikes him. Buonaparte, with inclinations different from his companions, separated himself from us, and therefore became, naturally enough, the object of our observation.

I do not recollect, that he ever shewed the slightest partiality in favour of any of his comrades: gloomy and fierce to excess, almost always by himself, one might say, that, newly issued from a forest, and till then withdrawn from the sight of men, he now began, for the first time, to feel the impressions of surprise and of suspicion. Continually alone, averse likewise to all that is called children's plays and amusements, he never was seen to share in the noisy mirth of his school-fellows: very far from that; if sometimes he came among them, it was only to find fault, notwithstanding the
known

known danger which a *boy-pedagogue* inevitably exposes himself by reprimanding his young companions, a danger of which his growing courage had early taught him not to be afraid ; for, when attacked by a number of our school-fellows, whom his offensive railleries had provoked, I have seen him repel, with the utmost *sang froid*, their blows and united efforts. Thus, so young, Buonaparte seemed to disdain to be no more than a child, as if he had already foreseen, that destiny would one day call him to surmount the greatest obstacles.

Buonaparte shewed very early the desire or rather the need of liberty. The love of his country (the island of Corsica, which he then considered as his native home) triumphed already over the sentiment of gratitude due to the bounty of the king. The idea of dependence appeared
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to him degrading ; he was humbled by it ; and often indignant to be exposed to the malicious witticisms of his comrades on the union of Corfica to the monarchy of France :—" I hope to be able," replied he, in the tone of an offended spirit, " I hope " to be able, one day, to restore it to freedom !" Unconscious then that he was to be called in a few years to fix the power of France itself, and decide the fate of the other great states of Europe.

His first steps in learning were not marked by any extraordinary progress ; and whether from carelessness or dislike, he gave but little application to the study of the Latin tongue. This negligence appears so much the more astonishing, as his desire of instruction and occupation very soon became in him a real passion ; but latent genius already directed his choice to the study of those

those branches of knowledge, which were afterwards to become the instruments of his glory. Mathematics, fortification, the attack and defence of places, but above all, the study of history occupied all his time. To these studies, he gave himself up without relaxation: and I have no doubt but his enthusiasm originated in his favourite reading of the lives of great and illustrious men, whom he had, from the beginning, proposed to himself as proper models.

No one was able to judge better than I of the uncommon avidity with which he pursued his readings, and the great connections which we had together on that head, were, doubtless, what contributed to fix my attention upon him in so particular a manner. To explain that more clearly, it is necessary to mention an establishment which had taken place, in the Military School

School of Brienne, during the residence of Buonaparte, which was the foundation of a library entirely under the direction of the young men, and destined to their pleasure and instruction. But, to give us proper notions of arrangement and of order, our superiors proposed to leave the distribution of the books, and the administration of the funds, dedicated to the support of the library, to the absolute management of two of the boarders, to be chosen by their comrades. I was one of those whom my school-fellows had named to that employment, to which I gave up the leisure hours of three years, perhaps the most pleasant of my life. It was then that I had repeated opportunities to see Buonaparte, who, perhaps, in preference to me, ought to have been chosen the librarian; but our companions thought otherwise; and probably he would have disdained the appointment, believing all the moments

lost to his own instruction, which he must have sacrificed to the minute detail of such an office. However that might be, his calls became so very frequent as to render me unreasonably out of humour. It is in the nature of man, and in my own justification, not less in that of children, to arrogate to themselves, by degrees, all the privileges of authority. It was, indeed, my duty to have been complaisant, but I found it more convenient to be capricious. Plagued by demands so often repeated, I sometimes pretended to mistake his application for teasing and intentional importunities; and sometimes also I had reason to repent my rudeness. Buonaparte young, was not more patient, nor less positive than now, and has made me frequently feel, that it was always unsafe to provoke him. At that time I should have been ashamed to own it, but at present such a confession is not so painful.

Reserved

Reserved in his temper, and wholly occupied by his own pursuits, Buonaparte courted that solitude which seemed to constitute his delight. He employed, during a long time, some of the hours allowed to recreation, in cultivating as a little garden that spot which fell to his share, of a considerable portion of ground which was divided among us. After having forced two of his partners to give it up entirely to him, his first care was to render the access to it difficult, by means of a strong palisade ; in forming which, he spent all the money which the Count de Marbœuf had sent to him for his little expences. The green arbours, which he planted himself, and cultivated with the utmost pains, rendered his garden, at the end of two years, the retreat of a perfect hermit. Woe to the curious, the malicious, or the playful, who dared to trouble his repose ! You might see

him burst furious from his retreat to repel them, nor was he deterred by the number of assailants. It was in this concealed retirement where the soul of Buonaparte, greedy of glory, insensibly evolved the seed of that noble ambition, feasting on the example of those great men which he was preparing himself to surpass.

A mode of life so very singular could not fail to be remarked. Incapable to estimate his uncommon merit, or rather to penetrate his true motives, his superiors, and his school-fellows taxed him as foolish and ridiculous. Every mean was tried, in vain, to restore him to himself, by making him change his conduct. Insensible to affronts which he could not resent, he repelled the railleries of the Masters by silence and disdain. Humiliation, and even punishment, which were also employed, had no better success.

success. I believe I have forgotten to mention that the meetings of the young men were established on a military footing. Divided into companies, they composed a little battalion, the colonel and all the officers of which, chosen among ourselves, were decorated by the ornaments which distinguish the French uniform. Buonaparte had the rank of Captain. One would suppose that he must be sensible to the loss of a distinction only granted to merit, and every day becoming more flattering from the eagerness by which it was sought for by the young men. A council of war, established with all its forms, declared him unworthy to command those comrades, whose good will he despised. After the sentence was read, which degraded him to the last place of the battalion, he was stripped of the distinguishing marks of his rank. Buonaparte appeared insensible to the affront, or dis-

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dained at least to shew that he was affected by it ; his superiors, perhaps, repented having obliged him to undergo this disgrace ; but his comrades, from that time, restored to him their friendship, because generous minded youth ceases to persecute those who are unfortunate.

This conduct had the most happy effect. Buonaparte testified his sense of the generosity of his young friends. He continued his studies, but became more sociable with his school-fellows ; he joined some times in our games, and acquired by that a right to propose, in his turn, some new diversion. It would have been little amusement to him if he could not have united utility with pleasure ; and, in fact, the plays which he proposed marked strongly his character. The Olympic games of Greece, and those of the Circus of Rome, were the models he proposed
for

for our imitation. Novelty pleases children, particularly those of France. Buonaparte became our leader, and the loss of his title of Captain was soon replaced by that of Director of our Diversions, which was unanimously granted to him. If men, in their pleasures, almost always exceed the limits of true moderation, we may easily suppose that virtue to be still more seldom the lot of young people. Our games became battles; by turns Romans and Carthaginians, Greeks and Persians, we believed ourselves called upon to imitate the enthusiastic fury of those ancient warriors. Stones were our weapons, and often productive of wounds, so that our superiors found themselves obliged to repress our courage. The games were forbidden, and our General severely reprimanded.

Buonaparte withdrew himself into his favourite garden, resumed his former occupations,

pations, and appeared no more among us, till the snow, which covered the ground, and concealed the stones, furnished him with a pretext to open a new campaign. The hostilities became necessarily of another sort, and the modern art of war succeeded to that of the antient. Being seriously occupied by the study of fortification, he wished to put his theory in practice; and soon entrenchments, forts, bastions and redoubts were erected of snow, in the great court of the school. We all laboured at these works with an activity and pleasure which can be easily imagined, the young Buonaparte directing our operations. The whole was executed with so much art and exactness, as to excite the curiosity of the people of the town, and even of strangers, who came in crowds, during the winter, to admire our fortifications of snow. As soon as these works were finished, we had no
peace

peace till the order of attack and defence was settled. Buonaparte again took the care of directing our motions ; and, by turns, at the head of assailants and opponents, he learned betimes, from these useful games, to unite address with courage. Snow-balls were the weapons of both parties, and the wounds they gave not being mortal, our Masters saw our diversions, without alarm ; they even had the good sense to encourage them, by applauding those who distinguished themselves, whether by their courage, or by some new stratagem. Buonaparte, already fertile in expedients, found means to keep up the interest, by devising every day some new *manœuvres* ; but the fun of the month of March disturbed our amusements, and put an end to them till the next winter.

Such was the school, and such the first essay of the yong hero, who since, at the

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head of a new raised army, without discipline, and almost without confidence, has known how to conquer the bravest troops of Europe, and disconcert the measures of the most experienced generals. Eager to gain the approbation of his young rivals, it was in these juvenile plays that he first learned the way to conquer; from them sprung that warlike enthusiasm, which afforded the first display of his great genius. Kindled into admiration of the heroes of antiquity, their great actions and virtues became his models, and the glory of surpassing them the object of his life.

Notwithstanding the constant exercise and amusements of which I have spoken, and in which Buonaparte took so active a part, I am fully persuaded that his constitution suffered much from long inaction, during his first years at school. A too close
appli-

application may perhaps retard more than a long continued repose ; for, though of a form calculated to resist fatigue, and of much natural strength, he had always the appearance of a weak and delicate health. Although of a middle stature, he is remarkable for the breadth of his shoulders ; his eyes, of a deep blue, are small but animated ; his hair brown, his forehead large and prominent, his chin sharp, his face long, and his complexion olive : the general expression of his countenance does not strike at first sight, but in observing him with attention, you can readily distinguish the traces of deep thinking ; and the vivacity of his looks indicates energy and activity.

His withdrawing from the society of his comrades had given a rudeness, perhaps a ferocity, to his manner ; and, subject to violent passion, his anger against his young

companions sometimes amounted even to fury: the instance I am going to repeat is most characteristic.

Every year, on the 25th of August, the day of St. Louis, the pupils of the Military School, in honour of the King, were permitted, almost without restraint, to give themselves up to pleasure, and the most noisy demonstrations of joy. Every species of punishment was suspended during that happy day, and it is easy to foresee, that it could seldom pass, without being attended by some accident; but without blaming or excusing that too great indulgence of our Masters, I will only recount that of which I was an eye-witness.

Whenever a pupil had reached the age of fourteen, a custom, (which we kept up with great care,) gave him the privilege to
purchase

purchase a certain quantity of gun-powder for St. Louis's day ; and during the fortnight which preceded that solemnity, the young people of that age associated together to prepare fire-works. The indulgence went even so far as to intrust them with some small pieces of artillery, some muskets and pistols ; which were fired to announce the day. What joy ! what moment !—perhaps the most happy of their lives.

So compleat and so animated was the general pleasure amongst the scholars, as to render more remarkable the indifference, real or affected, which Buonaparte testified on that occasion, the last year (1785), which he passed at the school of Brienne. Retired the whole day in his garden, he not only did not participate in the public rejoicing, but affected to continue his usual study and occupations, without being disturbed by

by the noise. His comrades were too much engaged in their own amusement to think of troubling him, and would only have laughed at him, if his strange behaviour, in an uncommon circumstance, had not drawn upon him the general attention.

Towards nine o'clock of the evening, about twenty of the young people were assembled in that garden which joined to his, where the proprietor had promised a show to his friends. It was a pyramid, composed of different kinds of fire-works, to be played off; unfortunately, he had forgotten to remove a little box, containing several pounds of powder; and the spectators little imagined how dear they were about to pay for their innocent curiosity. We were pressing round the little building, to which he had set fire; and while we were admiring the effect, some unlucky sparks entered the fatal

fatal magazine: the explosion was dreadful; some legs and arms broken, two or three faces miserably burned, and some paces of wall thrown down, were the disagreeable consequences of it: but while to save themselves, all those whom the splinters had not reached, broke down the palisades of the neighbouring garden, Buonaparte was seen armed with a pick-axe, pushing back into the fire all those who had burst through his fence: he became enraged in seeing the destruction of his arbour, and the blows which he bestowed on the unhappy fugitives increased the number of the wounded.

It is useless to say how our comrades were revenged. Buonaparte himself, without doubt, would own now that he justly deserved our resentment; but at that time he thought of nothing but his ruined garden: he had no concern in the imprudence
of

of his companions, and he thought it hard to be the victim of it. Exasperated, perhaps, by the noisy demonstrations of a joy, of which his heart did not partake, it is also very reasonable to suppose that rejoicings in honour of a king might have excited the ill-humour of a republican; and Buonaparte had long manifested his sentiments on that respect. However it may be, time seems to have much softened that unfeeling roughness; for the Conqueror of Italy is not less celebrated by his moderation towards his enemies, than by his brilliant exploits.

Buonaparte quitted the school of Brienne at the end of the year 1785. *M. le Chevalier de Renault*, then Inspector General, knew how to estimate the merit of that young man, to which he did justice, notwithstanding the bitter complaints of his Masters, whom his hard stubborn character

had

had generally rendered unfriendly to him. There was, in that year, a promotion of several of the King's pupils, whom their progresses in the studies had rendered worthy to be sent to the Military School of Paris: Buonaparte was of the number, his talents gave him value in the eyes of a gallant officer, who himself owed his preferment and his fortune to his own merit, and to the universal testimony of an irreproachable conduct. On his arrival at Paris, he testified his inclination to serve in the artillery, because this and the engineers were the only corps in France where interest and riches could not so easily usurp the place due to merit. He applied himself, with an unwearied zeal, to the mathematics, which then became his principal study, and was soon in a situation to go through the necessary examinations. He acquitted himself with credit, and was then promoted to the

rank of an officer in the regiment *de la Fère*, shortly before the Revolution.

From the principles which he had avowed so early, it is very natural to believe Buonaparte, at that memorable epoch, did not hesitate to declare in favour of independence. Always unalterable in his dislike of royalty, and devoted, to the love of glory, his ambition did not neglect so favourable an opportunity to signalize himself, as was presented by the Revolution. It is in difficult situations that a strong mind can best force itself into notice; in that moment, when timid indecision betrays its own weakness, it never hesitates to separate from the crowd; to triumph, or to die with glory, are the only alternatives, and from these nothing can turn it aside. Notwithstanding the danger of an early declaration in the beginning of the disturbances,

Buonaparte

Buonaparte disdained to feign. He declared himself in favour of freedom ; and seizing with enthusiasm the sense of *that decree*, which in the different classes of society acknowledges *no distinction* but personal merit, his heart expanded in the hopes of proving how much it imports to the glory of a nation, that no obstacle should be thrown in the way of talents. Almost all his brother-officers blamed him for so prompt a decision ; and the spirit of party occasioned soon after the most violent altercations between him and them, so that it was fortunate the loss of their friendship did not cost him his life.

One day, walking by a river side with some young officers, with whom he generally associated, the dispute ran high, and, in a moment of enthusiasm, of which there have been numberless instances in all the

wars of opinion, the young people enraged, seized Buonaparte, and were on the point of throwing him, head-long into the stream, when a momentary reflection made them perceive the shameful inequality of the number. Buonaparte could not be forced to retract his mode of thinking; the danger which he had run altered not his plan; but he broke off all connection with his companions till the revolutionary spirit having made more progress, induced some of those who had condemned him, to adopt, shortly after, the same opinion. The others listening to nothing but their attachment to the King, and despairing to be able to aid his cause at the head of troops who had the most decidedly revolted against him, took the desperate resolution to sacrifice their rank and fortune to the sentiment of honour and probity, by which they were animated. Their departure still rendered more exasperate those

those of their comrades who were attached to the opposite party. From that time they themselves elevated the standard of revolt, excited the soldiers to sedition, and gave publicly an example of the most violent excesses—But I must drop the curtain on such afflicting scenes; victories the most brilliant have reconciled them to the public mind, and we have almost lost a right to blame them since they have been attended by such invariable success.

Here, however, it gives me pleasure to say, that the Conqueror of Italy has not followed so criminal an example. He who owes his triumphs, as much to the good order which he knew how to maintain among his troops, as to his valour, was not to be taught, that nothing could be more incompatible with good discipline than the voice of sedition. A more noble ambition

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conducted him to glory, without ever having deviated from the difficult path of honour. His real knowledge was his first recommendation, and the art to unfold it usefully has since become the instrument of his fortune. A powerful friend *, it is true, seconded his personal merit, and facilitated his entry into that career, in which he has equalled the most celebrated heroes; but that partiality of his friend became a kindness to his country, and Buonaparte, by his victories, has justified his choice, and paid a glorious tribute of gratitude.

In 1790, Buonaparte accompanied to Corfica, General Paoli, who had made some stay at Paris. During the three years that he remained with his family he employed the whole of his time in improving himself still more in the theory of the military

* Barras.

science ;

science ; but disturbances which arose in that island in 1793, after the accusation brought against Paoli by the *Convention*, determined him to return to France. He persuaded his parents to accompany him, and the family settled near Toulon. The siege of that town, then occupied by the English, having taken place soon after, Buonaparte was promoted, by Barras and the other Commissaries, to the rank of General of Artillery. It was there he gave the first proofs of his military genius. Intrusted to direct the attack of the redoubts and out-works which formed the defence of the place, his bold and enterprising genius devised a plan which one would have thought impracticable, if the courage, of which he set the example, and knew so well to communicate to his army, had not taught us that he was not less capable to execute than to project.

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The reign of Robespierre, which immediately followed the retaking of Toulon, was unfavourable to noble actions, and an ignominious death becoming the lot of whoever excited the jealousy of that monster, condemned true merit to silence and retirement. I imagined Buonaparte to have been among the number of the victims, but the event of the 13th of *Vendemiaire* undeceived me. Barras, who directed, on that occasion, the measures of the government against the revolted sections, intrusted to him the command of the Conventional army after the resignation of General Gentili, whose deafness was an obstacle to the discharge of the duty of his post. The most compleat success justified still more the partiality of Barras for the young Buonaparte. Paris on the point of being reduced to ashes, saw its interior calm restored. The Convention was indebted for its triumph to

Buona-

Buonaparte, and France appeased as much by his firmness as by his courage, owed to him the preservation of a number of its citizens, whom a senseless fury had excited to destroy each other.

From that period to the moment when the French government formed the project of carrying the war into Italy, the public life of Buonaparte offers nothing very interesting; but the unfavourable auspices under which he was intrusted with the conduct of that dangerous expedition, contribute not a little to heighten his reputation. The ferocious Robespierre had sacrificed to his fury the best generals of France: Custine and Houchard, both well known by their great successes, had perished on a scaffold; Dumourier had betrayed his trust, and Pichegru, the conqueror of Holland, had been recalled; when Buonaparte, still

very young, was chosen to retrieve so many disasters.

On the eve of engaging the best troops and the most experienced generals of Europe, and in a country where nature presents on every side obstacles, which Hannibal alone had been able to overcome, the French troops could have little confidence in the conduct of a General of twenty-six years old ; unprovided as they were of magazines, inexperienced till now in the art of war, and in want of cloaths, the soldiers did not seem encouraged by the appearance of their new Chief. His exterior not very prepossessing gave occasion to many of their jokes. Buonaparte, far from being alarmed by these obstacles, did not seem at all affected by them. Persuaded that the attachment of soldiers cannot be forced, he sought the only true means of rendering himself worthy

worthy of their confidence. The pressing wants of his troops became the first object of his attention ; he employed himself unceasingly to supply them, and in a little time, his unremitting activity had provided for every thing. The army in a condition to act offensively was able very early to estimate the influence of his great talents. Hope elated every heart, and the campaign was hardly open, when the first essays of that ill organized army were marked by very important successes.

From this time I cannot follow the hero ; a pen bolder than mine is destined to record facts, which posterity will hardly be able to credit.—I had no other wish, than to give you some account of his early youth, and of his first conduct, at the beginning of the astonishing Revolution of France. Assisted by this slight sketch, which I have traced

traced for you, you will be able to discern, however, that from infancy, his character has been consistent. As intrepid in the execution of his projects, as he is unalterable in his principles, from the beginning of his military career, Buonaparte has displayed an ardour which is heightened by obstacles, a rapidity which anticipates every determination of the enemy. It is by following his blow, by redoubling his efforts, that he pours with his troops like a torrent against them. He is all activity; and everywhere the same; whether you behold him fighting, negotiating, punishing, it is always an affair of a moment, of a word; never any hesitation; he cuts the Gordian knot which he cannot untie.

As to the party to which he attached himself in the Revolution, it was a natural consequence of his opinions, which he ne-

ver was afraid to avow, even at the time
 when his frankness might have injured his
 fortune: he had cherished in his heart the
 love of liberty; that sentiment possessed
 him entirely, and his gratitude to Louis
 XVI, whom he considered as merely the
 dispenser of the benefits of the country,
 presented but a feeble barrier to a soul
 thirsting after glory, and the slave of an in-
 ordinate ambition. Besides, the throne of
 that unhappy prince was surrounded by the
 most flagrant abuses; court favour was be-
 come, in France, the only road which con-
 ducted to fortune, and falsified genius even
 in the court of a good king; because wick-
 ed ministers and restless courtiers opposed
 to merit an insurmountable barrier. What
 had Buonaparte to expect, (and every gen-
 tleman in the same unhappy situation, who
 had not fortune enough to purchase favour?)
 What hope could a long and painful service
 promise

promise to him—the Cross of St. Louis!—
—bestowed but with little distinction—a
poor reward of forgotten services!—

His great mind, I have no doubt, was ir-
ritated by these obstacles; his courage
was ashamed of so small a field for ac-
tion, and he embraced the opposite party,
which promised him a harvest of glory,
where talents would not be considered as a
crime. Two years dedicated to the difficult
trade of war have given to him the ex-
perience of ages; while his country, pla-
cing in him the most unlimited confidence,
left his genius unfettered, content to reap
the happy effect of his victories.

THE END.

promise to him—the Cross of St. Louis!—
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